

LUNCH AND LEARN GANG: Exotic Invasive Plants and their Native Plant Alternatives

June 5, 12-1:00 p.m.

Region II Conference Room

Yes, I'm guilty. I've planted things in my yard that I later learned were harmful for the native plants and animals. There's the burning bush, the barberry, the Rose of Sharon, the Bradford pear, the vinca or common periwinkle, even my treasured buddleja or butterfly bush.

For example, now I know that Japanese bloodgrass, a beautiful ornamental grass with red foliage that looks really nice in my rock garden, is none other than the dreaded cogon grass, considered to be the most invasive plant in the Southeast! So what alternative plants can I use for my landscaping instead of these bad boys?

The person that can answer these questions is Margie Hunter and she will be our next Lunch and Learn Gang presenter. Author of "Gardening with the Native Plants of Tennessee: The Spirit of Place," an invaluable resource for native plant landscaping, she will give a general introduction to exotic invasive plants and their associated problems. We'll find out how plants move around the world, the mechanics by which certain plants become pests, and the disruptions they cause in native biological systems.

Then we'll get to the happy part, talking about the nature and role of our native plants and the advantages they possess in the landscape. We'll discuss how the natural landscape of Tennessee with its nearly 3,000 plants species represents a unique biological treasure for gardeners.

Margie will show us photos of about 20 pest plants along with native plants that can be used quite successfully as substitutes in the garden. She'll bring copies for distributing of the new Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council's (TEPPC) brochure about native plant alternatives to these horticultural invasives.

Margie has been gardening for 25 years and has focused on native plants since 1996. She is on the TEPPC Board of Directors and a member of the Tennessee Native Plant Society and Perennial Plant Society of Middle Tennessee. A long-time volunteer at Cheekwood Botanical Garden, she shares her love of natives with various plant and gardening groups in Tennessee and the Southeast and has written articles for "Tennessee Conservationist" magazine.

So come to the next Lunch and Learn Gang program and you'll see why Margie's book stays on my bedside table. And pull up that bloodgrass!

Hosted by the I&E Department and held on the first Thursday of each month, except July, Lunch and Learn Gang presentations are about natural resource

related topics and last about 30-45 minutes, allowing time for discussion during the allotted lunch hour. If you would like to make a presentation, if you have topics of personal interest you would like us to address, or if you know someone who offers an interesting program, contact Patricia Miller at (615) 781-5276 or by e-mail: Patricia.Miller@state.tn.us.